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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

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TAGS: [CU](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: CUBAN DISSIDENTS FACE PROSECUTION

Classified By: COM: Michael E. Parmly : For reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Summary: Led by Jorge Luis Garcia Perez ("Antunez"), on June 20 six protesters delivered a letter of protest against the maltreatment of a prisoner to the Provincial Office of the Ministry of the Interior in the city of Matanzas. As they were sitting on a bench, they were accosted by members of the police and state security. The protesters report that the officials brutally beat them with fists and shoved them in a police wagon. They were held at a local jail for several hours. Police at 01:30 AM dropped off Antunez and his wife, who had lost her shoes during the arrest, almost a mile from their home in the city of Placetas. One of the demonstrators was hospitalized as the result of injuries inflicted by the police. Notably, the six were formally charged by the police in the incident and could face jail time for their activities. End summary.

¶2. (C) On June 19 Jorge Luis Garcia Perez ("Antunez") and his wife Iris Perez Aguilera tried to deliver to the Office of Prisons in Havana a letter of protesting the mistreatment of Iris's brother, Mario Perez Aguilera, who is incarcerated in the city of Matanzas. He had declared a hunger strike after claiming to have been beaten in prison. The Office of Prisons refused to accept the letter. The next day Antunez, Iris and four supporters presented the letter to the Provincial Office of the Ministry of the Interior in Matanzas and an official in charge of prisons received the letter. Antunez and his wife together with four others sat down on a bench close to the Ministry as a form of protest. The others involved were: Benito Ortega Suarez, Idania Yanes Contreras, Yesmi Elena Mena Zurbano and Blas Fortun Martinas.

¶3. (C) Within five minutes vehicles containing 14 plain-clothes officials and three uniformed officers arrived. According to the demonstrators, the officials immediately began hitting all of the protesters and put several in strangle holds. Antunez's wife stated that police beat her while she was on the ground. She lost her shoes in the scuffle. The official shoved the protesters into a patrol wagon. In the process, a window of the wagon was smashed. Antunez said that he kicked the walls of the wagon shouting, "Long live Human Rights," but denies breaking the window. Antunez said that the police beat him in the face in the wagon as he attempted to shout out to passers-by.

¶4. (C) At the local jail, officials told the protesters that they were being indicted for disrespect to the Chief of

State, resisting arrest, and, in the case of Antunez, destroying government property, a reference to the broken window of the police van. The protesters were released around midnight. At about 01:30 AM police dropped off Antunez and his wife, Iris, who was barefoot, nearly a mile from their home in the city of Placetas. Yanes Contreras went to the hospital after having blood in her urine, and remains hospitalized. Antunez and his wife have since declared a hunger strike to protest the incident, as well as the decision of the European Union to end sanctions on Cuba.

15. (C) Comment: This is the first time in close to a year that the GOC moved to initiate criminal procedures against protesters. Previously, the authorities were content simply to break up the demonstration and escort the participants home. It is not clear whether this indicates a tendency to crack down more forcefully on dissidents, or whether the authorities decided that they had to act specifically against Antunez, who has been detained on a regular basis for organizing marches.

PARMLY